

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /089 W
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R 180935Z FEB 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5701
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0355

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CVIS, SHUM, SREF, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQI CHRISTIANS

REF: BAGHDAD 333

1. PAPAL NUNCIO JEAN RUPP TELLS US HE HAS RECENTLY BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH LEADERS OF IRAQI CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. CHRISTIANS HAD BEEN CALLED IN BY HIGH GOI OFFICIALS WHO ASKED FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN COUNTERING CURRENT BAD PUBLICITY GENERATED BY POLITICAL ASYLUM REQUEST OF 34 IRAQI CHRISTIANS IN NY. OFFICIALS EXPRESSED CONCERN AND PERPLEXITY THAT LOCAL CHRISTIANS WERE DISSATISFIED WITH LIFE HERE IN SPITE OF GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO CREAT ATMOSPHERE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND REQUESTED THAT THEY BE TOLD OF ANY PROBLEMS SO THAT EFFORTS COULD BE MADE TO CORRECT THEM.

2. CHRISTIAN LEADERS REPLIED THAT PROBLEM WAS NOT ONE OF PERSECUTION OR DISCRIMINATION, BUT IS WAS SIMPLY A MATTER
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OF SEEKING GREENER PASTURES IN U.S. OR ELSEWHERE. FOLLOWING MEETING, SEVERAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS WILLINGLY WROTE LETTERS AND ARTICLES IN SUPPORT OF THE GOI.

3. RUPP, WHO STRONGLY MAINTAINS THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE NEVER HAD IT BETTER, COMMENTED THAT LEADERS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY HERE ARE WORRIED ABOUT LONG-RANGE

EFFECTS OF EMIGRATION BY MEMBERS OF THEIR FLOCKS.
EMIGRATION HAS ALREADY DEPLETED SOME CONGREGATIONS, AND
POSSIBLE BACKLASH FROM CONTINUED CRITICISM FROM OUTSIDE
COULD ACCELERATE THE FLOW. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT
RUPP, AT LEAST, ADMITS THE INTEREST OF HIS CHURCH
IN MAINTAINING THE CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN IRAQ.
PECK

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Message Attributes

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